

**ATTACHMENT #4**

**CONTRA FLOW LANES**

**I-45**

**(8 Pages)**

## **Talking Points- 9-23-05 2:00 p.m.**

### **Contra-flow lanes**

The State Operations Center (SOC) of the Department of Emergency Management assumes full control over state operations when a disaster occurs. The SOC is basically the state's version of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). During a crisis such as Hurricane Rita, the SOC serves as a central command post and instructs state agencies on what to do and where/when/how to do it.

The evacuation plan—developed with input from city, county and state officials and approved by the SOC—was implemented. The decision to change that plan and reverse lanes can only come from the SOC, and it did. After traffic clogged on major arteries Wednesday and continued into the night, it became apparent more needed to be done. At that time, the SOC decided to reverse lanes to help the estimated 2 million evacuees get out of harm's way. TxDOT immediately began to implement the plan.

Since Thursday morning, more than 400 miles of highway have been converted one-way out of the Houston/Galveston/Beaumont area to help move motorists away from Hurricane Rita. This is unprecedented in Texas and is of a scale that may never have occurred in the United States.

We realize the public wanted us to contra-flow all roadways leading out of the gulf coast area, but that is easier said than done. One-way traffic movement on highways not designed for it must be implemented very carefully.

All entrance ramps and intersecting highways must be blocked to avoid head-on collisions. This effort requires significant manpower, including law enforcement. Despite the many logistical challenges, one-way traffic flow was needed to move people out of harm's way. Although not always pretty and at times very frustrating, the evacuation has been effective in getting people to safety.

### **Fuel**

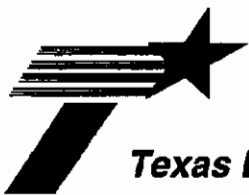
TxDOT is working to provide fuel for vehicles that have run out of gas as they move away from Hurricane Rita. We have opened TxDOT maintenance yards in areas north and west of Houston to provide gasoline to motorists. Local signs are posted to direct drivers to the sites, which will remain open until it is no longer safe to do so.

We understand that millions of people are trying to get out of the Houston-Beaumont area. We are doing everything we possibly can to assist in the safe flow of traffic. People in the Houston area are encouraged to call 311 for shelter assistance. For those outside the Houston area, please call 211 or (888) 312-4567 for state wide shelter assistance.

## **More**

For specific information on road conditions, you may call visit our Web site at [www.dot.state.tx.us](http://www.dot.state.tx.us) or call our Road Conditions Help Line at (800) 452-9292. Also, stay tuned to your local television and radio stations for updates.

Public Information Office  
Texas Department of Transportation



Sept. 23, 2005

## **Hurricane Rita Traffic Briefing – 5 p.m.**

In preparation of Rita's landfall in Texas, TxDOT now has special teams in place at our Bryan and Yoakum District offices. As soon as the hurricane winds decrease, these two teams will move toward the affected areas to remove debris from the roadway to allow first responders to get where they are needed.

Most of the staff of the Beaumont District has temporarily relocated to our Lufkin District office, where they will operate until they can move back into the Beaumont area.

The Lufkin, Beaumont, Bryan, Yoakum and Houston districts continue to assist stranded motorists in their areas.

Other TxDOT districts have sent equipment, personnel and supplies to the various districts involved in Rita-related operations.

### **Roadway report**

- All traffic lanes on I-45 from the Houston area to Ennis at U.S 287 are one way northbound. Tanker trucks have been deployed along the corridor to help improve the fuel situation.
- The reverse lane traffic on I-10 from Sealy to Seguin has been discontinued and normal direction of traffic has resumed.
- Travel on I-10 eastbound beyond Beltway 8 East in Houston and on U.S. 59 northbound north of State Highway 242 near Splendora is discouraged because of heavy traffic.
- Traffic on I-35 northbound from Waco to Hillsboro is heavier than normal.
- An additional lane was opened on I-35 northbound at the Red River (Texas-Oklahoma border). I-35 northbound had been restricted to one lane in this area for construction in Oklahoma during the last 9 months.
- The reverse lane traffic on U.S. 59 from Houston to Lufkin has been discontinued and normal direction of traffic has resumed.
- All traffic lanes on U.S. 69 from Lumberton to Woodville and from Zavalla to Huntington are one way northbound.
- All traffic lanes on U.S. 96 from Evadale to Jasper are one way northbound.

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For more information, call the TxDOT Public Information Office, (512) 463-8588.





**Texas Department of Transportation**

# news

125 E. 11th Street  
Austin, Texas 78701-2483  
(512) 463-8588 FAX (512) 463-9896

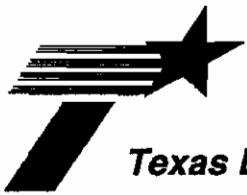
Sept. 22, 2005

## **12 noon Sept. 22 Hurricane Rita Traffic Briefing**

- \*As of 10:30 this morning, all lanes on I-10 from Sealy to Seguin are one-way going west
- \*TxDOT continues to work to make all lanes go in one direction, west, from Houston to Sealy on I-10.
- \*TxDOT continues to work to improve traffic from Houston on I-45
- \*First phase will open all lanes for one-way traffic going north to Buffalo, an 80-mile stretch.
- \*Future phases to include one-way north traffic from Houston to Dallas.
- \*We understand that millions of people are trying to get out of the Houston-Beaumont areas. We are doing all we can to help them.
- \*We are sending all available courtesy patrols to the area to assist stranded motorists.
- \*We have mobilized fuel trailers statewide to deliver gasoline to motorists low on or out of gas.
- \*We are on the way and we ask motorists to be patient. We will help you get safely out of harm's way and to your destination. But this is an unprecedented storm.
- \*If you see a fellow motorist in need, try to lend a hand if you can.
- \*For those Texans concerned about relatives still in Houston, we advise against travel to Houston. Instead, call 3-1-1 for local evacuation assistance for your loved ones.
- \*TxDOT is currently sending personnel and equipment to staging areas near the affected coastal areas, ready to start clean-up efforts once the storm subsides.

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For more information, call Mike Cox, TxDOT Public Information Office, (512) 936-4241.



**Texas Department of Transportation**

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Austin, Texas 78701-2483  
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Sept, 22, 2005

**2 p.m. Sept. 22 Hurricane Rita Traffic Briefing**

\*As of 10:30 this morning, all lanes on I-10 from Sealy to Seguin are one-way going west

\*TxDOT continues to work to work to make all lanes go in one direction, west, from Houston to Sealy on I-10.

\*As of 12:30 today, all lanes on I-45 from Conroe to Fairfield (90 Mile stretch) go one-way north

\*Future phases to include one-way north traffic from Houston to outskirts of Dallas.

Takes time; takes 3 DPS troopers at each on ramp for each closure; hundreds of ramps

\*We understand that millions of people are trying to get out of the Houston-Beaumont areas. We are doing all we can to help them.

\*We are sending all available courtesy patrols to the area to assist stranded motorists.

\*We have mobilized fuel trailers statewide to deliver gasoline to motorists low on or out of gas.

\*We are on the way and we ask motorists to be patient. We will help you get safely out of harm's way and to your destination. But this is an unprecedented storm.

\*If you see a fellow motorist in need, try to lend a hand if you can.

\*For those Texans concerned about relatives still in Houston, we advise against travel to Houston. Instead, call 3-1-1 for local evacuation assistance for your loved ones.

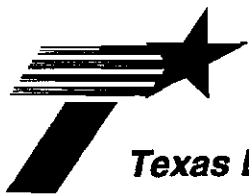
\*TxDOT is currently sending personnel and equipment to staging areas in Bryan and Yoakum ready to start clean-up efforts once the storm subsides.

\*At least 150 employees ready to clean up mess so emergency workers can get through once winds drop to 73 MPH or lower

\*At this point, hundreds of thousands of people already out of harm's way

**- 30 -**

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Sept. 22, 2005

**Emergency Special Statement No. 2, 8 a.m.**

The Texas Department of Transportation has been asked to contra-flow Interstate 45 North from Houston to Buffalo, about midway between Dallas and Houston.

This will be the largest reversal of traffic in Texas history, done to facilitate evacuations from the Houston area.

TxDOT emergency management coordinator Scott Alley said the State Operations Center requested the one-way flow from Houston shortly before 7 a.m. today.

The department intends to have the necessary signage in place to begin this unprecedented process about 9 a.m. today.

"The SOC says no one should be coming to Houston," Alley said. "Emergency traffic, such as law enforcement personnel and rescue workers, take U.S. 290 east into Houston."

TxDOT will have more information on this operation shortly, but it is urgent that the motoring public be notified of this situation immediately.

For people traveling south on I-45, please be prepared to exit the interstate prior to Buffalo, Texas.

**Possible alternative routes:**

**AT CORSICANA: Exit I-45-S to SH 31**

East to Athens: approximately 30 miles

West to Waco: approximately 45 miles

**AT FAIRFIELD: Exit I-45-S to US 84:**

East to Palestine: approximately 38 miles (hits US 79)

West to Waco: approximately 65 miles

**AT BUFFALO: Exit I-45-S to US 79**

South to Austin - approximately 135 miles

North to Palestine - approximately 36 miles

**AT BUFFALO: Exit I-45-S to FM 164 at Buffalo**

West to Waco - approximately 70 miles

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For more information, call Mike Cox, TxDOT Public Information Office, (512) 936-4241.